

Haiti Journal Entries  
Sunday, June 20, 2010

### Ken Hudgins

To our Hixson Family:

Would like to begin by thanking Bob & Carol Golden for getting the team to the Atlanta Airport on our church bus, minus one tire. While in Miami, waiting on our flight to Turks & Caicos, I noticed several mission teams going to Haiti. All the teams have different T-shirts. I thought to myself "Is there that much to do?" The earthquake was early this year.

Our first day was long; it ended with a short devo. Then we begin the mission trip ritual called "prepping the drug boxes", which is the chaotic procedure of organizing all the medication.

I've been to Haiti several times and understand the sights and sounds of this poor country with horrible living conditions. I feel the frustration of the land because nothing seems to change. As we were driving to church this morning on the way to Milot singing "There's No God Like Jehovah", I wondered if we would pass any of the other teams I saw in Miami. And then I realized, as I do every year, after passing mile after mile of the same conditions that yes, there is a lot to do it Haiti.

Brian, whose family is managing the Manna Compound, which we visit tomorrow, was driving our truck today. He was very insightful on the culture of the land. I asked about all the mission trip groups that come each year. I asked "Are they helpful or is it just a feel-good story for the team?" I would like to share his answer with the Hixson family. His answer was the only thing that can change Haiti is Jesus. And we have to do it one person at a time. Mission trips spark people that can change this country.

I leave you the scripture on the wall of the church in Milot we visited today: "First of all, I ask you to pray for everyone. Ask God to keep and bless them all. And then tell God how thankful you are for all of them."

### Jan Hudgins

Confused by the route of the day...through the sameness of the Haitian marketplace, I began to direct my thoughts to the worship service our group of 23 would experience. I gazed and observed some of our newcomers' faces and recalled the feelings I experienced on my first mission trip to Haiti. Todd's excitement and Tanner's calm and respectful demeanor were encouraging. Though Ben is a "world traveler" I was thrilled to see a glimpse of - "I don't know what I'll do today...but I will serve the Lord with my Haitian brothers."

Singing until we arrive at church has always been one of my favorites and today was no different...with the exception of the Golden's absence. I really miss them and am so grateful for their contributions each mission trip, whether to Haiti or Guyana.

Arriving early to Sunday School I am pleasantly amazed at the number of Christians who have already begun their worship inside the stucco building. Women, men, and children continue to arrive by way of dusty roads, hand in hand carrying their Bibles and a rag to wipe away the perspiration on their brow. As Christians came, seats dwindled and I excused myself to give my seat to a young woman and child. Upon wiping my brow I moved my eyes to gaze (alright, I did it!) at the woman bathing in the front yard next to the church building. One pail...then two...the soap suds were mounding and running down the muddy pathway. Taking my eyes away for only a moment, the lady and child appeared at the doorstep of the church dressed in their finest...completely ready to worship. Almost feeling uneasy I questioned myself if I am actually prepared to worship? Where is my mind...really, what am I thinking about prior to serving the Lord each Sunday?

### Caroline Vance

My first thought when I stepped out of the plane was “Wow – this is real!” Through all the news about Haiti from the earthquake, I thought I knew what it was like, but now that I’m here, I have learned I was wrong. On our way to the hotel after landing in Cap Haitien, of course I noticed the extreme poverty of the people. While I expected the people to be lazy, to form as a result of poverty, it was the opposite. They were all out on the streets doing something productive to help themselves. The amount of effort the Haitians put into just about everything far exceeds that of the majority of most Americans.

When we got to the hotel, it was clear that we were going to stay in an oasis in the midst of the poverty. The rooms exceeded my expectations greatly, and I was surprised how good the food was! That night the people new to Haiti shared their first impressions, and even though our perspectives and thoughts were different, a common bond held them together – the glory of God is evident here. That night, after a few intense rounds of Catch Phrase, we all quickly went to sleep.

### Ben Vance

Sitting on our balcony this morning looking out at eye-level from the second floor, the sights and sounds at 30 feet were beautiful. Majestic trees with branches about to snap from all the fruit, exotic lizards scurrying down the bark, and the symphony of birds calling out all grabbed my attention in the first few minutes. Looking up, I could see towering mountains in the background set against a gorgeous blue morning sky. From 30 feet to 30,000 feet, the scenery was simply spectacular.

It wasn’t until I looked downward outside the gates that the poverty and desperation hit me once again. Focusing my attention at ground-level is depressing and heartbreaking. However, it doesn’t take much of a tilt of my head to look higher and be amazed at the beauty in this country reaching to the sky.

A scripture of the day that we read in preparation for the trip is the first part of Psalms 121 that says “I will lift up my eyes to the hills...” Psalms 123 says “Lord, I look upward to you, you who live in heaven.” All of us get caught up in the here and now – the view from 30 feet down. School, work, power struggles, possessions, and ego all force our

heads downward. But when I read these scriptures, I have to believe that God is trying to adjust our chin to not look down but rather to look outwards and upwards. Looking to the hills in Haiti this morning was a good place to start.

We often talk about what it means to be a community church – being “in the world but not of the world.” With that in mind, let me describe the church we visited today in Milot. While sitting in worship, there were women out back cooking over an open fire in order to feed the community. To the front was a steady stream of car horns, scooters whizzing by, and roosters crowing. To the right was a door where a stray dog kept entering and exiting, while to the left was a boy taking a bath in a steel tub and a man carrying a machete coming in from the fields. Yet in the middle of it all was a devoted group of believers with the most heartfelt singing and definitely the hardest “Amen!” I’ve ever heard. No Powerpoint or Media Shout presentations, no fancy gadgets checking children in and out of class, and no “Passing Go”...just a simple church plopped right in the middle of its community that exists to help the needy, to seek and save the lost, and to point them to a loving (and serious) God.